

Annual meeting of the Bureau of the Economic and Social Council
with the Chairs of the ECOSOC Functional Commissions and Expert Bodies

Remarks of the Chair of Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues,

Ms. Anne Nuorgam

1 February, 10 am – 12 pm NY time

President,
Excellencies,
Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for this opportunity to address the ECOSOC bureau and Member States and present the views and proposals of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues to contribute to the ECOSOC work programme and the thematic review of the HLPF.

The sessions of the Permanent Forum are one of the largest gatherings at United Nations Headquarters. It provides an opportunity to bring the voices of indigenous peoples from all corners of the world to the experts of the Permanent Forum – and hence provides legitimacy, relevance and energy to the recommendations that emerge from the discussions.

Owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Permanent Forum postponed its 2020 annual session with the theme of *“Peace, justice and strong institutions: the role of indigenous peoples in implementing Sustainable Development Goal 16”*, which has consequently been rolled over to the 2021 session. **During this year's session**, the Forum will also include discussions on indigenous peoples and the 2030 Agenda and the item on Future work will address the issues considered by ECOSOC and emerging issues, specifically challenges and responses to pandemics.

Furthermore, I am pleased to inform you that to support the emerging issues agenda item, an **international expert group meeting on “Indigenous Peoples and pandemics”** a theme recommended by the Permanent Forum and endorsed by ECOSOC, was held virtually in December 2020. Key recommendations from the meeting include the urgent need to address the extreme disadvantages already faced by indigenous peoples and to secure the full enjoyment of their rights. There was

agreement that COVID -19 recovery plans should take a human rights-based approach that, promote the rights to self-determination, lands, territories and resources and accessible quality health care and education. It was also stressed that it is necessary **to rethink and adjust the implementation of the SDGs during the Decade for Action** since the pandemic has exposed new challenges. The report of the 2021 Permanent Forum will be submitted to ECOSOC to provide input for the High-Level Political Forum.

Mr. President,

Member States adopted last year the **Declaration on the 75th Anniversary of the United Nations** and committed to a **Common Agenda**. The Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues will assist you in this endeavor by being the platform to provide substantive inputs to the thematic reviews of the HLPF, highlighting what is needed to ensure that indigenous peoples are not left behind in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. In addition, in line with its mandate, the Permanent Forum has made several recommendations related to indigenous peoples' priorities in the 2030 Agenda. Many of them are very relevant to tackle the current challenges identified in the Common Agenda.

Mr. President,

In the 2020 High-level Political Forum, 47 Member States presented their **Voluntary National Reviews** on the national implementation of the SDGs. Of these countries, 14 referred to indigenous peoples.¹ This is good indication of inclusion of indigenous peoples but not enough. The Permanent Forum therefore urges countries undertaking voluntary national reviews at the HLPF to include indigenous peoples under all SDGs.

The Permanent Forum welcomes that the President of ECOSOC in the summary of the 2020 HLPF reported that many speakers emphasized the need to involve vulnerable groups, including indigenous peoples in decision-making and take their needs and rights into account. Further, the President noted that the COVID-19 pandemic had a devastating and highly disproportionate impact on the most vulnerable communities, notably indigenous peoples, inter alia, exacerbating pre-existing economic, social, environmental inequalities and threatening the achievement of the SDGs. Member

¹ Argentina, Bangladesh, Burundi, Costa Rica, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ecuador, Finland, Honduras, India, Federated States of Micronesia, Nepal, Panama, Peru, and the Russian Federation.

States must respond with more urgency to the unfortunate realities of indigenous peoples within their nations.

Mr. President,

The Permanent Forum has shown initiative in **cooperating with other ECOSOC subsidiary bodies**, for example, we have worked with the Commission on the Status of Women, to raise awareness on the multiple layers of discrimination and marginalization that indigenous women continue to face. It is also crucial that we continue include indigenous peoples' issues in the work of ECOSOC, in particular in the High-Level Political Forum; the ECOSOC Youth Forum; ECOSOC Partnerships Forum; and ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development follow-up. The Permanent Forum stands ready to explore opportunities to further strengthen this cooperation.

I look forward to today's discussion, to hear your views on how, we can together, map our way forward.

Thank you